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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ACCRA 002240

SIPDIS

FOR AF/W MICHAEL ARIETTI, GHANA DESK OFFICER LARRY JOHNSTON,

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/11/2024

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [GH](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA PRESIDENT ON COTE D'IVOIRE

REF: YATES/ARIETTI PHONE CON 11/11/2004

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARY C. YATES FOR REASONS 1.5 (A),(D)

1. (C) Summary: President Kufuor told the Ambassador November 11 that he would attend the emergency meeting in Abuja on November 14 as part of South African President Mbeki's diplomatic initiative to address the Cote d'Ivoirian crisis. President Gbagbo will be invited but may or may not attend. Kufuor thinks Gbagbo may be more flexible because of the changed situation with the French on the ground. Kufuor believes President Gbagbo should still implement Linas Marcoussis agreement and that Gbagbo must force his parliament to act. He opined that all current key Ivoirian leaders should not be allowed to run for election and that new leaders should be given a chance. The killing of the French military gave the French the "pretext" to take actions protecting their citizens and their businesses, but Kufuor was not critical of the French. End Summary

2. (S) Ambassador met with Ghanaian President John A. Kufuor, along with CJA, Chief of African Division, for 40 minutes on November 11. The ambassador used the opportunity to query the president about the current deteriorating situation in Cote d'Ivoire and possible regional initiatives to address the crisis. (Subject of Reftelcon) Kufuor first spoke at some length about the generic insecurity problems in West Africa and the destabilization of outside mercenary forces. Specifically, Kufuor said that in connection with South African President Mbeki's current diplomatic initiative, that he had just been invited by President Obasango to a meeting in Abuja scheduled for a two hour duration at the airport on Sunday, November 14 and that he would attend. He was aware that President Mbeki of South Africa, President Wade, and probably the presidents of Burkina Faso and Mali would attend. President Gbagbo would be invited and be urged to attend, but Kufuor was not fully confident Gbagbo would attend. (Subsequent press reports report Libya's Khadafi will also be invited.) It was not clear whether other Ivoirian leaders would be invited to this meeting, but Kufuor said he understood that Ouattara and Soro may not have travelled to South Africa to meet with Mbeki 11/11 as previously planned.

3 (C) When asked what hope was held for this diplomatic initiative after Gbagbo's failure to advance Accra III promises, President Kufuor said Gbagbo was in a more difficult and insecure situation because of recent events which might make him more receptive to a diplomatic initiative than he was during Accra III. He said Gbagbo must take "the bull by the horns" and stop using the parliament as an excuse. He must tell the parliament they have to pass the legislation which implements the Linas Marcoussis agreement and moves the election calendar forward for all parties. He must lead, said Kufuor. Kufuor also opined that the entry of French had changed the situation since the Accra III talks, and should also change Gbagbo's stance.

4. (C) On the political scene, Kufuor repeated several times that it was a "freak" that Gbagbo had ended up as the President of Cote d'Ivoire since he had always just been a minor opposition leader even during President Houphouet-Boigny's time. Since Gbagbo did not represent either of the two major parties in the country during any normal election, he should never have ended up with the position. Since happenstance gave Gbagbo this position, instead of trying to cling on to power, Gbagbo should contemplate his leadership of an entire nation and his legacy. Kufuor said emphatically and repeatedly that all current leaders in Cote d'Ivoire (Gbagbo, Ouattara, Bedie, and Soro) must give way to new, younger leaders in their parties. None of them should be allowed to run in the election because none of them can unify and lead the entire nation.

5. (C) On the French intervention, Kufuor said that the killing of the French soldiers by the Cote d'Ivoirian military gave the French the "pretext" they needed to move in and protect their citizens and their businesses. Kufuor was not critical of the French and quite realistic about their current role as contributing to the stability both of their citizens, other foreigners and the French and international businesses. He even suggested they could play a constructive role in getting CI through the next free and fair national

election, but needed to know when to leave so not to be seen as a occupying force.

16. (C) Comment: Despite Kufuor's reference to Gbagbo as his brother, there was clear frustration at Gbagbo's lack of comprehension of the seriousness of his situation, and inability to provide the nation leadership. The Ambassador thanked Kufuor for taking time out of his final weeks of campaigning to go to Abuja this Sunday. (The president is currently on the campaign trail in the interior about five out of seven days.) Kufuor admitted that after all the efforts at Accra III, he just felt he had to step back and take care of his own country. He seemed relieved that President Mbeki had stepped in to play a leadership role.
YATES